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The End of the ‘New World Order’? Security Governance and US Imperialism after 9/11

ABSTRACT

The concept of global governance has emerged as a key theoretical approach since the 1990s. Applied to the transformation of international security, it has suggested a shift from the state-dominated bipolar system of the Cold War era to a new multipolar and multilateral security architecture in which state, non-state and international actors collaborate in the making and implementation of security policies. Then came September 11, 2001 and the war in Iraq. Today we appear to be more likely to discuss the nature of American hegemony and the stability of a unipolar international system.

Observing the clash between these two competing perspectives of international security, the aims of this paper are threefold. First, this paper seeks to examine the respective theoretical assumptions underlying the concepts of hegemony and governance. Second, it examines the competing hypotheses proposed by these two theories with regard to international security. Third, it discusses in how far the empirical evidence since September 11, can be taken as indication of either a hegemonic strategy by the United States and balancing or bandwagoning behaviour by other major powers, or the continuation of security governance.

CONTENTS

The End of the ‘New World Order’? Security Governance and US Imperialism after 9/11

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 1990s the concept of global governance has emerged as a new framework for the analysis of international relations. The proponents of this approach have argued that we are witnessing a fundamental transformation of global politics in the form of increasing integration and fragmentation. At the heart of these two developments is a shift away from the state as the primary authority and unit of analysis in international affairs. Although states retain a central role, the literature on global governance suggests that states are complemented by a growing number of international organizations and private actors, such as multinational corporations or non-governmental organizations which are taking on functions ranging from the making to the implementation of international policies.

Moreover, while previous studies of globalization and international integration observed these tendencies predominantly in international finance and economics, the proponents of global governance find that the dispersion of policy making capabilities and authority among state and non-state actors can increasingly also be observed in areas such as international security. The Commission on Global Governance thus recognized in its report of 1995 with regard to international security:

> *“The breakdown of the bipolar cold war system means that responses to security crises – both with preventive efforts and beyond them – have to come from a wider group of national and organizations than before. The United Nations, particular the Security Council, has the principal responsibility. But regional bodies and a wide range of civil society organization are now in a position to play useful roles.”*[1]

By the beginning of the new century the notion of global governance has become increasingly popular in the study of international security. Its propositions that the international security environment has changed radically with the end of the Cold War and that interstate war has been replaced by subnational and transnational threats such as civil war, ethnic cleansing, transnational crime and terrorism seem to form the basis of a new consensus. In addition, a growing number of authors are examining the proliferation and contributions of non-state actors in international security.

The conflict and intervention in the former Yugoslavia has been the key event which has illustrated this transformation of international security. Not only has the first and most direct threat to the major Western powers after the end of the Cold War been

[1] Commission on Global Governance (1995) *Our Global Neighbourhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.99f.

caused by internal factors which mirror the fragmentation thesis, but also has the international response to the conflict been characterized by a multiplicity of actors including major power such as the United States (U.S.), Britain and France, international organizations such as NATO, the United Nations and the European Union, and non-state actors such as the International Red Cross, national and international charities, and private military companies.

Moreover, the policies of the U.S. under the first two administrations following its rise to the status of the ‘only surviving superpower’ appeared to embrace the notion of global security governance. Despite their different political affiliations, both the Bush and Clinton administrations seemed to emphasize multilateralism and the use of international organizations in order to promote a ‘new world order’ which was to replace the realist international system of bipolarity and balance-of-power that had dominated the Cold War era.

The events of September 11, and the security policies of the current Bush administration appear to have challenged this new model. Although with terrorism a transnational security threat was the cause of the attack, subsequent policy responses seem to have moved away from the trend towards security governance. Specifically, the reaction of the U.S. government seems to be more in line with traditional concepts of neorealist power politics than with global governance. The interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq not only suggest that transnational security threats can be dealt with within a state-centric framework, they also seem to show that at least superpowers can do so without the help of other state and non-state actors.

Accordingly, the questions raised in the recent academic debate are not how to make security governance more effective in order to deal with new transnational security threats, but whether we are witnessing the rise of imperialist U.S. hegemony within a system which seems, despite all assertions to the contrary, still the domain of nation-states. Moreover, this return to realist thinking suggests that U.S. hegemony will eventually be challenged and that this will lead to a new era of interstate conflict.

Observing the clash of these two competing visions of international security for the new millennium, the aims of this paper are threefold. First, this paper seeks to examine the diverging theoretical assumptions underlying the concepts of hegemony and governance with regard to international security. Second, it outlines the competing hypotheses proposed by these two theories regarding the policies of major powers and the likelihood of conflict. Third, it discusses in how far the empirical evidence since September 11, can be taken as indications of either a hegemonic strategy by the United States and balancing or bandwagoning behaviour by other major powers or the continuation of security governance.

2. IMPERIALISM AND SECURITY

In order to fully understand the questions whether we are witnessing the rise of American hegemony and how this will impact upon international security, it is necessary define the concept of hegemony and its place within international relations theory. This section proceeds to do so by first distinguishing the notion of hegemony from other concepts such as imperialism and unipolarity. It then discusses the assumptions and hypotheses regarding international security linked to these concepts within neorealist theory.

Unipolarity, Hegemony and Imperialism

The recent literature on U.S. political and military pre-eminence is characterized by a confusing variety of terms and concepts, including ‘unipolarity’, ‘primacy’, ‘hegemony’ and ‘imperialism’.[2] Moreover, these terms are combined or juxtaposed in multiple ways. Thus varying authors distinguish between ‘non-hegemonic’ and ‘hegemonic’ unipolarity, between ‘benign’ and ‘(neo)imperialist’ hegemony or between ‘benevolent’ and, presumably, ‘evil’ empires. Furthermore, there does not seem to be a clear consensus as to which of these terms applies to the U.S. in the post-Cold War international environment. It is only through systematic analysis that the differences between these concepts and their interpretation of American primacy can be established. This paper suggests that it is useful to distinguish between three distinct, but interrelated concepts: unipolarity, hegemony and imperialism.

The concept of polarity can be defined as the relative distribution of capabilities within the global international system. It is a structural concept. In the bipolar system of the Cold War, polarity was characterized by the overwhelming political, military, and economic resources of the U.S. and the Soviet Union – the two ‘superpowers’. Accordingly, the break-up of the Soviet Union, has left the U.S. as the sole superpower and the only ‘pole’. It is thus widely accepted that we are currently in a unipolar system. No other state, including Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China, can compare to the U.S. in terms of GDP, military spending or political influence.

The concept of hegemony is also typically defined in terms of the distribution of capabilities within the international system. However, unipolarity does not necessarily entail hegemony, nor can hegemony only be found in unipolar structures. What distinguishes hegemony from unipolarity is a relational element. Hegemony can be defined as capabilities that are matched by influence over some or all members of the

[2] John Agnew (2003) ‘American Hegemony into American Empire? Lessons from the Invasion of Iraq’, *Antipode* 35:5, pp.871-885.

international system.[3] During the Cold War, i.e. under the conditions of bipolarity, hegemony was thus ascribed to the U.S. in relation to its allies within the North Atlantic Alliance and Asia. Today, U.S. hegemony within the Alliance persists or has even expanded with the enlargement of NATO.

The definition of imperialism, conversely, can be said to rest on policies in addition to capabilities. This notion of imperialism builds on unipolarity and hegemony in that it suggests not only the capabilities and influence to shape international relations, but also the willingness to do so. In addition, imperialist powers seek to expand their influence and capabilities and to prevent other states from challenging their pre-eminence within the international system through conquests and interventions.

Based on this differentiation between unipolarity, hegemony and imperialism, the diverging interpretations of the U.S. position in international affairs since the early 1990s become explicable. U.S. policy shifts after September 11 may justifiably have transformed perceptions of the United States from that of a ‘benign hegemon’ to a ‘neo-imperialist’ power. In sum, this paper suggests that although the condition of unipolarity may remain unaltered, changes in influence and policies determine whether we are faced with non-hegemonic, hegemonic or imperialist unipolarity.[4]

Imperialism in Neorealist Theories

The second question that needs to be answered is how unipolarity, hegemony and imperialism can be placed within international relations theory and how these concepts add to our understanding of security and conflict. The most extensive discussion of unipolarity and hegemony in relation to international security can be found within the neorealist tradition, and it is therefore on this body of literature that this paper will focus.

Neorealism builds on two assumptions. The first assumption is that states are the key actors in international security. Historically, this premise rests on the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence which was increasingly institutionalized during the past century through professional national armed forces and national arms industries. Indeed, the Cold-War Fordist state can be seen as the prime embodiment of this principle in that it centralized not only the provision of national and international security, but also of other key public functions such as healthcare, education and communication. The state became the central political authority to the near exclusion of any other.

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[3] Compare David Wilkinson (1999) ‘Unipolarity without Hegemony’, *International Studies Review* 1:2, pp.141-172; However, this definition departs from Wilkinson’s in that it recognizes that hegemony can be found in unipolar as well as multipolar structures.

[4] Wilkinson (1999) ‘Unipolarity without Hegemony’; Immanuel Wallerstein (2002) ‘The Eagle Has Crash Landed’, *Foreign Policy*, July-August.

The second assumption is that the international system is anarchic and that states are the most dangerous threat to one another. This premise follows directly from the first since the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence within the state means that there is no overarching authority at the international level with sufficient power to enforce peaceful coexistence and cooperation. It also asserts that no other actors have military, economic or political capabilities which can compare to or effectively threaten states. Interstate war and the 'stability' of the international system, i.e. the survival of states, are the central concern of neorealist theory.

From these two assumptions follows that in order to ensure their own security states have to deter other states from threatening or attacking them. Their ability to do so effectively rests on their national military, economic and political capabilities. In addition, states can seek to enhance their power vis-à-vis other states by entering temporary alliances either to 'balance' the primary powers, and thus threats, within the international system or to 'bandwagon' with them in the hope that these powers will protect them from other states.

But what does neorealism say about unipolarity, hegemony and imperialism? Traditionally, many neorealist authors have been very sceptical about the maintenance of international security and stability under unipolarity. In particular Kenneth Waltz, the inventor of neorealism, argues that unipolarity is inherently unstable because of the lack of balance of power within the international system. Other states will inevitably feel threatened by the dominance of a single superpower and will try to counter it. Michael Mastanduno agrees:

> *"Balance-of-power theory is very clear about the behavioural implications of unipolarity. States seek to balance power, and the preponderance of power in the hands of a single state will stimulate the rise of new great powers, and possibly coalitions of powers, determined to balance the dominant state."*[5]

Worse still, some neorealists conclude that "*major or global wars may erupt as a consequence of such challenges to hegemonic control*".[6] However, there is little that the dominant power within the international system can do to prevent these conflicts. According to David Wilkinson's summary of neorealist theory "*[t]he mere fact of its preponderance guarantees the rapid rise of competing powers. […] Balance-of-power*

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[5] Michael Mastanduno (1997) 'Preserving the Unipolar Moment: Realist Theories and U.S. Grand Strategy after the Cold War', *International Security* 21:4, pp.49-88, p.54.

[6] Thomas J. Volgy and Lawrence E. Imwalle (1995) 'Hegemonic and Bipolar Perspectives on the New World Order', *American Journal of Political Science* 39:4, pp.819-834, p.824.

theory suggests further that efforts to preserve unipolarity are bound to be futile and likely to be counterproductive.”[7]

Other neorealist authors are less pessimistic about the prospects for international security in a unipolar world. They suggest that hegemonic unipolarity might be the key to preserving peace.[8] Specifically, they argue that a hegemonic power can use its resources to deter or appease challengers.[9] The first strategy involves maintaining or expanding its military and political preponderance because a greater capability gap between the hegemon and any potential challenger is more likely to discourage the latter. The second strategy involves the hegemon’s use of its political influence to create international institutions which benefit its allies and the international order. The ability of its allies and other states to free-ride on the benefits of these institutions will decrease their incentives to oppose the hegemon.

However, whereas a hegemonic strategy might enhance stability under unipolarity, imperialism might threaten it. Thus, G. John Ikenberry writes:

> *“My hypothesis is that the greater the United States tilts toward liberal hegemony, the greater the incentives these states will have to engage in cooperative behaviour with the United States. The greater the United States tilts toward imperial hegemony, the more incentives states will have to resist or move away from the United States.”*[10]

According to this line of thinking an imperialist strategy endangers peace for two main reasons. First, it increases the threat perception among enemies as well as allies. Since the imperialist power is not only capable, but also willing to use its resources to actively prevent any would-be challengers from arising, no state can feel secure. Even cooperation with the imperialist power might not be sufficient to avert its interference as distrust is an inherent feature of the international system. Indeed, cooperation with the imperialist power might strengthen its position and further exacerbate the threat. Second, the imperialist power is less willing to appease allies through multilateral cooperation or support for international institutions. Since the imperial power has the capabilities to implement its security policies unilaterally, cooperation can only delay or distract from its national interest.

As summarized in Table 1, neorealism proposes several hypotheses with regard to security under the conditions of non-hegemonic, hegemonic and imperialist unipolarity.

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7 Mastanduno (1997) ‘Preserving the Unipolar Moment’, p.55.

8 For a summary of their arguments see Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross (1996/7) ‘Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy’, *International Security* 21:3, pp.5-53, p.32.

9 G. John Ikenberry (2003) ‘Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence: Great Power Politics in the Age of Unipolarity’, *National Intelligence Council*, at: http://www.cia.gov/nic/confreports_stratreact.html.

10 Ikenberry (2003) ‘Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence’.

Non-hegemonic unipolarity is unstable and can lead to major interstate wars as new powers arise to challenge the sole superpower. Hegemonic unipolarity is more stable in that it might at least avoid interstate wars between the hegemon and its allies. It cannot, however, prevent new threats from emerging among non-allied major powers. Imperialist hegemony is the least stable because it increases threat perceptions among allies as well as enemies and encourages counterbalancing policies.

***Table 1**: Security under Unipolarity*

	Non-hegemonic Unipolarity	**Hegemonic unipolarity**	**Imperialist unipolarity**
Structure	Single pole with overwhelming capabilities	Single pole with overwhelming capabilities and influence over some or all members of the international system	Single pole with overwhelming capabilities and influence over some or all members of the international system
Policies	Isolationist	Multilateralist and interventionist	Unilateralist and interventionist
Threat	Major powers	Major non-allied powers	major allied and non-allied powers
Stability	Unstable	More stable	Least stable

3. GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY

The concept of governance has only recently been developed and applied to the study of international security. This section analyses the main characteristics of the concept before discussing the assumptions and propositions which may be derived from a theory of security governance for the making and implementation of contemporary security policies.

Global Governance

Since the 1990s, the concept of governance, which subsumes policy making arrangements at the subnational, national and global levels, has been characterized by a variety of definitions and uses. However, in recent years there appears to have been an increasing convergence of meaning. According to this common understanding, the shift from ‘government’ to ‘governance’ denotes the increasing differentiation of political authority among state and non-state actors across levels of analysis.[11] As I have argued elsewhere, this fragmentation of political authority can be observed in seven

[11] Ernst-Otto Czempiel (1992) ‘Governance and Democratization’, in James N. Rosenau and Ernst Otto Czempiel (eds.) *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp.250-271, p.250; Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss (1996) ‘Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions’, in ibid. (eds.) NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance (London: Lynne Rienner), pp.17-47, p.17.

dimensions: geographical scope, functional scope, distribution of resources, interests, norms, decision-making and policy implementation.[12]

Geographical fragmentation away from the state as central unit specifically takes three forms: ‘downward’ to local bodies, ‘upwards’ to international organizations and ‘sideways’ to private and voluntary actors. Functional fragmentation appears in the form of aligning national and international policy making arrangements along functional divisions, whereas resource fragmentation can be understood as the dispersion of policy making and implementation capabilities among state and non-state actors. With regard to interests, it can be argued that the underlying premise of government is that individual preferences can and should be subordinated to the common interest, while governance accepts the heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting nature of interests and seeks to ensure that each actor can pursue them as uninhibited by external regulation as possible. In so far as coordination is necessary, it is perceived to be best left to market forces or the actors themselves.

Governance norms, too, appear to favour fragmentation by prioritising the right to self-determination over the authority of the state. The differentiation of policy-making norms and ideals is specifically represented in the increasing limitation of national sovereignty, self-government and the marketization of social relations. Finally, governance is characterized by the horizontal differentiation of policy making and implementation among state and non-state actors. As a consequence, decision-making within governance typically proceeds through negotiation and the formal and informal acceptance of structural inequality, for instance through weighted voting procedures, and policies are implemented in a decentralized fashion. In fact, policies are often self-enforced and compliance is frequently voluntary.

Security Governance

But how does governance relate to our understanding of international security? There has been a growing recognition that fragmentation and integration increasingly also characterizes the making and implementation of international security policies. The origins and consequences of this development are grasped by the concept of ‘security governance’.[13]

The suggestion that we are witnessing the emergence of a system of security governance since the 1990s, rests on several assumptions concerning the changing nature of contemporary international relations. These assumptions are strikingly different from the premises of neorealism. The first assumption is that states are not

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[12] Elke Krahmann (2003) ‘National, Regional and Global Governance: One Phenomenon or Many?’, *Global Governance* 9:3, pp.323-346.

[13] Elke Krahmann (2003) ‘Conceptualizing Security Governance’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 38:1, pp.5-26.

longer the primary threat in international security. Instead, the literature on security governance suggests that we are facing a growing number of intra-national and transnational threats and conflicts. This assumption builds on data from a variety of sources such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) or the Heidelberger Institut für Internationale Konfliktforschung (HIIK) which show that while interstate war is declining in frequency, new threats such as civil war, transnational crime and terrorism are on the rise. Moreover, these statistics reveal that the number of internal and transnational conflicts by far exceeds those of interstate wars.[14]

The second assumption is that due to the complexity and internal or transnational nature of these threats, states increasingly need to cooperate with other actors, including other states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private firms, in order to effectively provide for their national security and that of their citizens. Not only is the multiplicity and diversity of contemporary security threats putting increasing strain upon state resources, states are also finding that the sovereignty-bound policy making arrangements which have been developed over the past centuries are inadequate when it comes to addressing transnational security issues. As a result a growing number of international organizations and private actors such as charities and private security companies have emerged in order to deal with security issues such as humanitarian aid, human rights monitoring, refugees, and military training and protection.

The third assumption is that state legitimacy is no longer based on the monopoly on the provision of national and international security, which they appear to be loosing due to the above factors, but increasingly its cost-efficient delivery. Resting on the neoliberal norms of governance, such as privatization and marketization, this assumption suggests that the replacement of ‘government’ with ‘governance’ has changed security policy making in a more fundamental way.

Several hypotheses follow from these assumptions for international security. First, the shift towards governance encourages geographical and functional specialization in order to allow for a more cost-efficient provision of security by state and non-state actors. Since states’ security and defence capabilities will be less and less suited for unilateral interventions, this will lead to a reduction of threat perception among states and decrease the probability of interstate wars.

Second, due to the fragmentation of capabilities states will increasingly need to collaborate in security. To do so they will be able to choose among multiple strategies,

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[14] SIPRI (2003) *SIPRI Yearbook 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); HIIK (2003) *Konfliktbarometer 2003* (Heidelberg: HIIK), at: http://www.hiik.de/de/barometer2003/Konfliktbarometer_2003.pdf

international organizations and ‘coalitions of the willing’. Based on the neoliberal principles of governance, actors should increasingly pursue those strategies and cooperations which are most cost-efficient with respect to a particular security issue. Key factors include agreement with other actors, their capabilities and expertise, as well as closeness and relevance of a security problem. Conflicts in Europe, for instance, will be dealt with by other institutions and actors than in Africa; humanitarian security problems by other sets of actors than terrorism. In fact, actors are likely to use multiple organizations or coalitions at the same time in order to get maximum benefit from the specific capabilities and remit of each.

Third, free-riding on the security provision of hegemonic or major powers will decrease because transnational security threats will affect everybody in a globalized world and require transnational cooperation. The ability to free-ride will also be undermined by the functional and regional specialization of security organizations.

In sum, the theory of security governance supports several predictions with regard to contemporary security. The frequency of interstate wars among the major powers will decrease further due to geographical and functional specialization. Hegemons and major powers will progressively share the burden of providing national and international security with other state and non-state actors. Changing and flexible ‘coalitions of the willing’ will replace alliances because of the diverse nature of contemporary security threats, different interests and capabilities.

4. INTERNATIONAL SECURITY POST-SEPTEMBER 11

Having clarified the theoretical assumptions and hypotheses linked to hegemony and governance respectively with regard to international security [Table 2], this section examines the evidence from U.S. and major power policies since September 11 in support of either perspective. To do so this section is divided into three parts. The first part discusses whether the policies of the U.S. since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center can be defined as non-hegemonic, hegemonic or imperialist. The second part then analyses how America’s allies and other major powers have responded to U.S.

***Table 2**: Hegemony and Security Governance*

	Hegemony	**Security Governance**
Actors	➢ States	➢ States, international organizations, private actors
Assumptions	➢ Interstate war is the most important threat ➢ States cannot collaborate ➢ States gain legitimacy from the effective provision of national security ➢ States are like units	➢ Intra-national and transnational threats are most important ➢ State and non-state actors need to collaborated ➢ State and non-state actors gain legitimacy from the cost-efficient provision of security ➢ State and non-state actors need to specialize

	Hegemony	Security Governance
Hypotheses	➢ Security is increasingly threatened by wars among major powers ➢ Security depends upon the policies of the superpower: (1) **Hegemonic strategy:** ➢ Leads to bandwagoning of allies ➢ Balancing of enemies ➢ Security is threatened by wars between hegemon and enemies (2) **Non-hegemonic strategy:** ➢ Eventually leads to balancing by major powers ➢ Security is threatened in the long-run by wars between superpower and major powers (3) **Imperialist strategy:** ➢ Hastens balancing by major powers ➢ Security is highly threatened by wars between superpower and major powers	➢ Security is threatened by intranational and transnational actors ➢ Security is less threatened by wars among major powers ➢ Security governance favours several strategies: (1) Geographical and functional **specialization** (2) **Collaboration** between state and non-state actors (3) Changing and flexible **‘coalitions of the willing’**

strategy and whether their actions concur with the hypotheses of neorealism. The third part examines whether and to what degree U.S. and major power policies over the past three years alternatively match the propositions of security governance theory.

U.S. Strategy: Non-hegemonic, Hegemonic or Imperialist

Based on the definitions of non-hegemonic, hegemonic and imperialist unipolarity presented in this paper, there appears to be a widespread perception that U.S. security policy has undergone a fundamental shift under the current Bush administration and in particular since the events of September 11.[15] Thus Robert Jervis writes:

> *“The United States today controls a greater share of world power than any other country since the emergence of the nation-state system. Nevertheless, recent U.S. presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton still cultivated allies and strove to maintain large coalitions. […] By contrast, the fundamental objective of the current Bush doctrine – which seeks to universalise U.S. values and defend preventively against new, non-traditional threats – is the establishment of U.S. hegemony, primacy or empire.”*[16]

As has been argued above, there are several elements to what might be considered U.S. imperialism. First, there is a considerable agreement that the current international

[15] William Wallace (2002) ‘American Hegemony: European Dilemmas’, *The Political Quarterly* 73, Supplement 1, pp.105-118, p.112; Edward Rhodes (2003) ‘The Imperial Logic of Bush’s Liberal Agenda’, *Survival* 45:1, pp.131-154.

[16] Robert Jervis (2003) ‘The Compulsive Empire’, *Foreign Policy*, July-August, pp.82-87.

system is unipolar with the U.S. as the pre-eminent power in terms of military, economic and political capabilities. In his detailed review of U.S. military power, Barry Posen thus points out that that the U.S. produces 23 percent of the gross world product. Moreover, 3.5 percent of U.S. GNP are devoted to defence as compared to 2.3 percent in China, 3.8 percent in Russia, and 2.5 percent in the United Kingdom and France.[17] In SIPRI's analysis of the fifteen main spenders on defence in 2002, the U.S. thus ranks first with US $335.7 billion, followed by China with $142.9 billion, India with $66.5, Russia with $55.4 and France with $36.8.[18]

Second, in addition to capabilities the U.S. has significant influence in international relations, allowing it to pursue both hegemonic and imperialist policies. The U.S. dominates most major international institutions such as the United Nations, NATO, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank[19]; it has close bilateral and multilateral relations with major and minor powers such as Germany, Japan and South Korea which to a large degree remain dependent upon American military and nuclear protection; and it has what Joseph Nye has called 'soft power' which builds on the nation's prestige and reputation, its cultural and economic influence and its diplomatic relations which put it in a prime position for the generation of coalitions in international relations[20].

Third, the current Bush administration has shown an increased willingness to use this power in a unilateral manner and has adopted a doctrine of pre-emptive intervention in order to prevent would-be challengers to its position as the pre-eminent power in the international system.[21] It is this final element which appears to define U.S. policy post-September 11 as imperialist. The shift from a hegemonic to an imperialist policy is specifically embodied in the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* published in September 2002 which asserts:

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17 Barry R. Posen (2003) 'Command of the Commons. The Military Foundations of U.S. Hegemony', *International Security* 28:1, pp.5-46, p.10; SIRPI Military Expenditure Database.

18 Ranking in purchasing power parity according to SIPRI (2003) 'The 15 Major Spender Countries in 2002', at: http://projects.sipri.org/milex/mex_major_spenders.pdf

19 Wallace (2002) 'American Hegemony: European Dilemmas', p.108; Michael Cox (2002) 'September 11th and U.S. Hegemony – Or Will the 21st Century Be American Too?', *International Studies Perspectives* 3:1, pp.53-70, p.65.

20 Wallace (2002) 'American Hegemony: European Dilemmas', p.118.

21 Edward Rhodes (2003) 'The Imperial Logic of Bush's Liberal Agenda', *Survival* 45:1, pp.131-154, p.134; G. John Ikenberry (2002) 'America's Imperial Ambition', *Foreign Affairs*, 81:5, pp. 44-60; Wallerstein (2002) 'The Eagle Has Crash Landed'; Mary Kaldor (2003) 'American Power: From 'Compellance' to Cosmopolitanism?', *International Affairs* 79:1, pp.1-22, p.13.

> *“We know from history that deterrence can fail; and we know from experience that some enemies cannot be deterred. […] Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States.”*[22]

With the war in Iraq the U.S. put its new strategic doctrine into practice. Based on what has now been revealed as faulty intelligence, the current Bush administration decided to intervene pre-emptively to stop Iraq from continuing the development of weapons of mass destruction which would endanger the current world order. The intervention showed all the signs of an imperialist strategy. Not only was it a pre-emptive attack on a sovereign country already weakened by years of sanctions, it was also conducted without an explicit United Nations authorization and against the protests of American allies and other major powers, including Russia, China, France and Germany. Moreover, unlike the first Gulf War, the military operation was in essence unilateral with the U.S. accepting only support from the United Kingdom.

In sum, much of the empirical evidence appears to support the notion that the current position and security policy of the U.S. can be described as imperialist unipolarity.

Major Powers: Bandwagoning or Balancing

The evidence post-September 11 concerning the response of both allied and non-allied major powers, which typically are identified as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, and Russia and China respectively, to the imperialist security policies of the U.S. is contradictory. As G. John Ikenberry observes:

> *“Scholars of international relations tend to think about two basic strategies that are available to states as they confront a predominant state: balancing and bandwagoning. One is the classic strategy of counter-balancing alliance. The other is the strategy of appeasement and acquiescence. But today, strategies for coping with a pre-eminent America tend to fall in between these extremes.”*[23]

While neorealist theory suggests that the declared imperialist strategy of the U.S. should uniformly hasten balancing behaviour among allies and non-allied powers, most countries aligned themselves with the U.S. in its ‘war on terrorism’.[24] NATO’s Article 5, which calls on the collective defence of any alliance member under threat, was invoked for the first time since its foundation with America’s Western European allies unanimously declaring their support for the U.S. and its subsequent intervention in Afghanistan.

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[22] President of the United States (2002) *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: The White House), pp.29f., at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf.

[23] Ikenberry (2003) ‘Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence’.

[24] Wallace (2002) ‘American Hegemony: European Dilemmas’, p.113.

Even non-allied major powers such as Russia and China, which should have felt threatened by a U.S. military operation in Central Asia which these two powers have traditionally regarded as their backyard, ‘bandwagoned’ with America in the immediate aftermath of the attacks.[25] Russia even contributed to the intervention in Afghanistan by providing the U.S. with intelligence, by approving U.S. military bases in the former Soviet Republics Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and by offering landing rights in Tajikistan.[26] Moreover, Russia supported the U.S. although the Bush administration had just unilaterally renounced the anti-ballistic-missile (ABM) Treaty and NATO expansion was progressing against its will.[27]

Conversely, major allied and non-allied powers chose to ‘balance’ the U.S. when the Bush administration identified Iraq as the next target in the ‘war on terrorism’. In particular, France, Germany, Russia and China opposed a pre-emptive military intervention in Iraq and insisted that the United Nations inspection team should be given more time in order to establish the existence of a WMD programme. Moreover, the four countries threatened to veto a resolution in favour of the intervention proposed by the U.S., the United Kingdom and Spain in the United Nations Security Council.[28] When the U.S. began air strikes on 20 March 2003, the four countries led international protests against the intervention with China calling for an ‘immediate halt to military actions against Iraq’.[29]

The most surprising evidence of balancing behaviour came from Turkey which has traditionally been a strong supporter of the U.S. within the Atlantic Alliance. Despite its close relations with the U.S. and despite an offer of $24 billion in U.S. grants and loans to compensate for the impact of the war, Turkey decided to reject a U.S. request for access to military bases on the border to Iraq thus dealing a severe blow to U.S. military planning. American strategists had counted on being able to open a second front in northern Iraq by launching up to 62,000 troops from Turkish territory. In fact, much of this contingent was already waiting on U.S. warships in the Mediterranean and had to be re-diverted to the Gulf.[30]

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25 John Gittings (2001) ‘US Claims China and Russia as Allies’, *The Guardian* , 22 October.

26 Henry R. Nau (2002) ‘Does NATO Matter Anymore’, The Observer, 15 September.

27 Ian Traynor (2001) ‘Russia Puts on a Brave Face on the Inevitable’, *The Guardian*, 14 December.

28 Gary Younge, Nick Paton Walsh, Jon Henley and Oliver Burkeman (2003) ‘Russia and France Angered by End of Diplomacy’, *The Guardian*, 18 March.

29 Jon Henley, Nick Paton Walsh, John Gittings and John Hooper (2003) ‘Harsh Words from Peace Camp, Muted Praise from Backers’, *The Guardian*, 21 March.

30 ‘Turkey Delays Vote on US Troops’*, The Guardian*, 27 February 2003; ‘Turkey Delays US Troop Decision’, *The Guardian*, 3 March 2003; Helen Smith (2003) ‘Turkey Opens Airspace but Blocks Airbases’, *The Guardian*, 20

However, the recent balancing behaviour of allied and non-allied countries over Iraq has not represented a general policy shift in response to a more imperialist U.S. either. Since the end of the war, most major powers have collaborated with the U.S. in the pacification of Iraq or have offered financial aid for the reconstruction effort.[31] In conclusion, thus the empirical evidence concerning neorealist hypotheses which state that an imperialist strategy of a sole superpower will lead to accelerated and uniform balancing behaviour among allies and non-allies, appears rather weak.

U.S. and Major Power Strategies: The Continuation of Security Governance

An alternative vision of international security is presented by a theory of security governance. Specifically, this competing theory proposes three hypotheses to explain contemporary national and international security policies. First, it argues that states are not ‘like units’ as suggested by neorealism, but increasingly endorse geographical and functional specialization in the provision of security. Second, it suggests that states do not need to compete, but progressively accept the need for collaboration with both state and non-state actors. Third, security governance proposes that hegemonic stability or imperialist unilateralism are replaced by changing and flexible ‘coalitions of the willing’.

The policies of the U.S. and other major powers since 11 September 2001 can thus be interpreted in a different way. In particular, security governance theory reveals the complexity of contemporary interventions beyond the seemingly clear leadership of the United States. The intervention in Afghanistan thus shows evidence of an emerging division of labour in which the U.S. and the United Kingdom undertook the initial military operation, whereas the subsequent peacekeeping mission has been led by a number of countries with fewer offensive capabilities, but growing experience in post-conflict reconstruction, such as Germany and the Netherlands. Similarly in Iraq, a variety of countries which supported the U.S. intervention has contributed to peacekeeping since the end of the war.

Since the end of the Cold War, there thus seems to be a general trend in which the U.S. and, possibly, France and the United Kingdom as countries with superior military technologies take on peacemaking, whereas those countries which have manpower, but lack modern weapons systems provide the large numbers of military personnel which are necessary to sustain long-term peacekeeping operations, such as in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and now, so it appears, also in Iraq.[32]

March.

[31] David Sharrock (2003) ‘£8bn Pledged but Aid to Rebuild Iraq Falls Short of Target’, *The Times*, 25 October.

[32] Currently 34 countries are contributing 22,000 troops to the stability operation in Iraq, including Albania,

Moreover, if one looks beyond the ‘war on terrorism’, the geographical reach and interests of the ‘global’ imperial power U.S., are more limited as suggested by the term and much of the literature on the American ‘hyperpower’. During the recent re-emergence of conflict in Liberia, a country founded by American freed slaves and which retains close links to the U.S., 2,300 U.S. troops remained safely on their ships stationed off the Liberian coast, while the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sent a 3,250-strong peacekeeping force.[33] The current Bush administration thus does not seem averse to regional self-management of security issues by specialized organizations such as ECOWAS or the European Union which was already encouraged under Clinton.

In addition to functional and geographical specialization, there is ample evidence for collaboration between the U.S. and other state and non-state actors in spite of the unilateralist rhetoric of the Bush administration. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. sought a United Nations mandate and consulted extensively with allied and non-allied countries. Although these consultations did not ultimately influence the outcome in terms of U.S. military intervention in the latter, they nevertheless indicate the willingness to cooperate on major international security issues. Recently, the U.S. was urging for a greater role of NATO in the ongoing peacekeeping missions in both countries in order to alleviate the strain on its own armed forces.[34] Moreover, although the U.S. clashed with major allied and non-allied powers over Iraq, these disagreements did not create any military hostilities and seem very unlikely to lead to interstate wars. As G. John Ikenberry argues:

> *“It seems likely that the United States will not choose to go very far down a neo-imperial path – the costs are too great and it is ultimately not an unsustainable grant strategic orientation for the United States. It seems also likely that the basic character of the order that exists between democratic great powers – Western Europe, the United States, and Japan – will persist even under conditions of unipolarity. That is, these*

Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Estonia, Georgia, Honduras, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. See: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm

[33] Martin Woollacott (2003) ‘America Helped Ruin Liberia. Now It Must Help Repair It’, *The Guardian*, 1 August; Andrew Osborne (2003) ‘Seven US Marines Enter Monrovia as Taylor Challenges War Crimes Court’, *The Guardian*, 7 August; Toby Manhire (2003) West African Press Review, *The Guardian*, 6 August.

[34] Elaine Sciolino (2004) ‘Drifting NATO Finds New Purpose with Afghanistan and Iraq’, *The New York Times*, 23 February.

> *countries will continue to inhabit a ‘security community’ where the disputes between them will ultimately be settled peaceful [sic].”*[35]

Beyond the military operation, the reliance of the U.S. on the capabilities and resources of other actors, however, becomes more apparent. As has been pointed out above, both the intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq are drawing increasingly on the military personnel and financial aid of countries other than the United States. In particular the latter was also offered by states such as Russia, China, France and Germany, which had opposed the intervention. The current U.S. budget deficit which has been fuelled by increased defence spending and the costs of the intervention further show that even a superpower which accounts for 23 percent of the world gross product cannot ‘go it alone’.[36] Additional problems are created by the overstretch of the U.S. armed forces which effectively prohibit any further major interventions until the U.S. is able to withdraw from Iraq – either after a peace has been secured or after they have been replaced by an international preacekeeping force.

Moreover, already during the intervention, the U.S. depended heavily on private military capabilities to support its national armed forces. In particular airlift and logistics are today provided by private companies rather than the military itself, and the current stability mission makes extensive use of private contractors for internal and external security and reconstruction.[37] Halliburton’s subsidiary Brown and Root, has already been used for these purposes in the former Yugoslavia and has recently reached notoriety for overcharging the U.S. military over supplies and services in Iraq.[38]

Finally, there is empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that hegemonic leadership within stable alliances or imperialist unilateralism are progressively replaced by ‘coalitions of the willing’. The divisions within NATO over the Iraq intervention thus could not be overcome by a hegemonic U.S. as during the Cold War. Moreover, when NATO did offer its support as before the intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. and the United Kingdom chose not to make use of its capabilities or decision-making structures. Only after the military operations were concluded in Iraq and Afghanistan,

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35 G. John Ikenberry (2003) ‘Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence: Great Power Politics in the Age of Unipolarity’.

36 Bradley Graham (2004) ‘Military Spending Sparks Warning’, *Washington Post*, 8 March; Tom Shanker (2003) ‘Pentagon Says It May Need to Call Up More Reservists’, *New York Times*, 25 September.

37 Jonathan Weisman and Anitha Reddy (2003) ‘Spending On Iraq Sets Off Gold Rush’, *Washington Post*, 9 October.

38 Jackie Spinner (2004) ‘Halliburton to Return $27.4 Million to Government’, *Washington Post*, 4 February.

NATO was considered as a potential contributor.[39] However, the refusal to use or work within the multilateral institutions of NATO is not considered a return to multipolarity and instability as would perhaps be suggested by neorealism. Rather it seems part of a more flexible approach towards alliances and international institutions. According to this approach, alliances and international organizations are tools which can be used for particular purposes, such as peacekeeping, and in particular circumstances, such as agreement among its members, but not others. Crucially, since states continue to cooperate in one or another institution, this flexibility does not entail any threat.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to help clarify the debate over the nature of contemporary international security. Are we witnessing the return to classical balance of power politics in which the U.S. as the sole surviving superpower can impose hegemonic or imperialist policies upon other nations or the continuation of a new era of security governance which began after the end of the Cold War? In order to do so, it has aimed to clarify our understanding of the concepts of hegemony and governance and the hypotheses respectively linked to these two approaches with regard to international security. Moreover, it has selectively examined the empirical evidence in support of the two theories.

Its findings suggests that albeit the contemporary international system can justifiably be perceived as unipolar and although some of the security policies of the current U.S. administration might be interpreted as imperialist, a neorealist perspective of international security unduly neglects other evidence which might lead to a radically different vision of international security. This evidence illustrates that the influence of the U.S. in international security is generally overestimated and that the U.S. depends to a greater degree on the collaboration of other state and non-state actors than a neorealist perspective would admit. Moreover, the empirical evidence contradicts neorealist hypotheses concerning the increased probability of balancing behaviour among both allied and non-allied countries.

Security governance theory, conversely, can help to highlight and explain the complexities of the policies of the U.S. as well as other major and minor powers. It suggests that geographical and functional specialization can help account for differences in security policies based on regional interests and national capabilities. It also illustrates why allied and non-allied countries may choose to collaborate with the U.S. on some issues, but not others – and in spite of its preponderance. Finally, security

[39] Elaine Sciolino (2004) ‘Drifting NATO Finds New Purpose with Afghanistan and Iraq’, *The New York Times*, 23 February.

governance theory accounts for the changing nature of international institutions from military alliances to issue-specific ‘coalitions of the willing’.

What follows from this debate? This paper would suggest that the competing evidence in favour of each theory, leads to crucial conclusions about the future of international security. If neorealist hypotheses can be considered as relatively weak in comparison with those of security governance, its proposition that we are likely to see the emergence of new major power conflicts between the U.S. and challengers such as Russia, China, or even France, Germany or Japan, might also be discounted. Instead we might agree with security governance theory in expecting a future which will not be more peaceful, but one in which major and minor powers will increasingly cooperate in addressing the prevalent internal and transnational threats that we are witnessing today.

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